

done an outstanding job and should be saluted for her environmental trail blazing.

REMEMBERING THE GENOCIDE OF THE ARMENIANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. KENNEDY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to speak on a matter that is very close to my heart, to stand with my Armenian friends and brothers and sisters across this country and around the world that today remember their parents and grandparents that were killed in a genocide that existed on April 24, 1915, and for several years following that date. That is a period of time that means so much to the Armenian people throughout the world, and it is a period of time that unquestionably was a genocide against a people simply because of their race, of their religion, and of their heritage, their ethnic heritage, which means so much to that people throughout the world today.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that on the floor of this House that we a few years ago, when I first was elected to the Congress of the United States, refused to acknowledge the word genocide despite the fact that the origin of the actually word genocide came as a result of the witnesses that bore truth to the facts that took place on April 24, 1915.

The truth of the matter is that this has become a highly political debate, a debate that is fueled by modern-day politics that somehow feel the squeeze of the invisible hand of the ancient Ottoman empire that continues to have its hidden hand in the policies that take place on the floor of this House and throughout the world today, and I call upon this administration, the Clinton administration, to acknowledge the fact that a genocide did, in fact, take place on April 24, 1915, and to recognize the tremendous contributions that the Armenian people continue to make to this country today. We see an unprecedented success story of ethnic heritage and of a completion of a complete taking part in American life by the Armenian people.

□ 1900

A tremendous success story in terms of economic development, a success story that also remembers the roots of the American people. When you look at the kinds of schools, the kinds of language, the newspapers, the fact that in my district today there will be children walking down the streets of Watertown, MA, remembering that their parents and grandparents and great grandparents were killed simply because of who they were, it is important that we today in this House acknowledge the fact that a genocide took place and acknowledge the fact that still today prejudice takes place throughout the world against the Armenian people.

That is why I called upon and saw passed in this House the act which we refer to as the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act, that calls upon the Turks to finally open up the borders between Armenia and Turkey, to open up trade between Armenia and Turkey, that talks about the fact that we need to break down the barriers that exist between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the Assyrians, to finally stop the fighting and to finally open up trade so that we can create peace in that region. We need to continue to work through IDA and through the World Bank to make certain that we are providing the necessary humanitarian aid.

Mr. Speaker, I visited Armenia just 2 or 3 years ago in the dead of winter and saw little babies freezing in their own urine inside hospitals where the temperature was 10 or 15 degrees because of the fact that that country has been so cut off from the rest of the world. This is a land that has had the greatest success story of the former Soviet states, and yet today still suffers not because of the drive and determination of the Armenian people, but because we allow and the world allows the prejudice to continue to take place against Armenia by both Turkey as well as Azerbaijan.

So on this date of April 24, let me call upon the people of the United States to remember the tremendous contributions that the Armenian people continue to make to the United States, and let us call upon our own sense of history and heritage to ask that the Russians, to ask that the Turks, to ask that the Assyrians finally come to grips with the true meaning of humanitarianism and provide decent, honorable and open trade with the Armenian people, with the country of Armenia, to bring about continuation of democracy, a continuation of economic prosperity, and to recognize the tremendous contributions that the Armenians continue to make throughout the world and most particularly in the United States of America.

COMMEMORATING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Ms. PELOSI] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in observing the anniversary of the Armenian genocide. I commend my colleagues, Mr. PALLONE and Mr. PORTER, who are leaders in this Congress on Armenian issues and thank them for organizing this special order to draw attention to the tragic slaughter of the Armenian people.

On April 24, 1915, the Armenian people were subjected to a ruthless policy of deportation, property confiscation, slavery, and murder by the Ottoman Empire. This barbaric policy was unquestionably genocide. Over the 8 years

between 1915 and 1923, 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children were killed and more than 500,000 more had been forcibly removed from the country. The Ottoman Empire and subsequent Turkish regime engaged in a systematic campaign to destroy cultural and religious monuments, change the names of locations and places, and deny the very existence of the Armenian people in this region.

At the time, the world recognized this crime against humanity and organized a worldwide humanitarian relief effort under the leadership of the United States. It is time for us again to call attention to this genocide.

I have recently joined my colleagues, Mr. PALLONE and Mr. PORTER, in sending a letter to President Clinton urging him to reaffirm the Armenian genocide as a crime against humanity. In addition, I was pleased to work with a number of my colleagues in including the provisions of the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act in the 1996 foreign operations appropriations bill which has been signed into law.

The Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act restricts United States aid to Turkey until the Turkish Government ceases its obstruction of United States humanitarian aid deliveries to Armenia. The foreign operations appropriations bill also provides funds to continue the United States program of humanitarian assistance to the Armenian people.

The Armenian-American descendants of the Armenian exiles make a vibrant contribution to the life and energy of the San Francisco bay area. I join with them today in observing this anniversary of the Armenian genocide and in honoring the memory of their ancestors.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that as we remember these tragic events both of the Armenian genocide and of the Holocaust, we must remember that there are crimes against humanity that are being perpetrated today. The appropriate tribute to those who have given their lives in the past to these crimes against humanity is to make sure that these acts do not continue and that we must be ever vigilant and speak up against them.

In the remainder of my time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to talk about the minimum wage. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that all of us in this Chamber or all of us who serve in this Chamber would agree that the actions that we take here should serve to build family, to reward work, and to value the American worker.

That is why it is so hard to understand why the Republican leadership in the House is hesitating, indeed has said they probably will not bring up legislation to increase the minimum wage. To remind our colleagues, a person who works full-time at the minimum wage makes \$8,840 a year. In a two-earner household where both parents work, they bring home a rip-roaring \$17,000 a year. For a family of four, this is below

the poverty line and indeed below the line of dignity that we owe the American worker.

I am disappointed that the Republican majority will not bring up an increase in the minimum wage, but I am further mystified by the Republican attempt to avoid raising the minimum wage by proposing something which they claim is an increase in the minimum wage combined with an expansion of the earned income tax credit. It is neither. It is simply an attempt to distract attention from the Republican failure to raise the wages of low-income families.

The Republican proposal would cut the earned income tax credit. That means it would increase the tax, if there were a tax, which there is not, so it would serve to put fewer dollars in the pockets of the lowest income people in our country. It would create a three-tiered Federal payment for low-income workers.

This is not only an insult to the American worker, but it is an insult to American business. We are saying to American businesses: We think you do not value the work that your workers do, so we are going to subsidize that work by having a government program to give you money to pay your workers, because obviously you do not value the contribution they make to your business.

What is happening here? How could it be that the Republicans, who talk about reducing the size of government and to promote the free enterprise system, are talking about subsidizing the wages officially that are paid to workers?

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to once again call to our attention, and I am going to have this blown up for future presentation, how long does it take to make \$8,840. The full-time minimum wage earner, 1 year. What a full-time minimum wage earner makes in 1 year, the average CEO of a large U.S. corporation makes in one half a day. How could this be fair? How could this be just? We salute their entrepreneurial spirit and their success, but we reject the injustice of it all.

CONGRESS SHOULD LINK WELFARE REFORM TO MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate you recognizing me, and I appreciate this opportunity to address what is now a pretty empty and still Chamber, but hopefully some of my colleagues are still following our discussion on the floor this evening.

I intend to talk about a number of very timely issues and concerns, but I want to begin my special order by addressing my colleagues who this

evening, most recently just a couple of moments ago the gentlewoman from California, who brought up the minimum wage issue, but prior to her the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE] and the gentleman from California [Mr. MILLER] who brought up the minimum wage issue.

I want to also preface my remarks by inviting any of my colleagues who want to discuss any of the issues that I raise tonight to join in this special order. I will be happy to yield time, both to my Republican colleagues on the majority side of the aisle as well as my Democratic colleagues on the minority side of the aisle.

First of all, let me say with respect to the minimum wage issue, I am a little unclear why this has suddenly become—except for the possibility that it is being used now as a political football by the National Democratic Party—why this has become such a pressing issue here in Washington.

Now, do not get me wrong. Back in 1994, while campaigning for Congress, I committed to voting for a modest increase in the minimum wage. It was my feeling back then and it is my feeling today that the minimum wage needs to be increased to keep pace with inflation, and that without an increase in the minimum wage, we will be witnessing a further erosion of the purchasing power of the minimum wage, which is going to put very low-income workers further and further behind the economic curve and exacerbate this growing income gap and I guess you could say this potential economic chasm that is dividing American society.

Just a few weeks ago I was one of seven Republicans who on this floor voted for a procedural motion that would have allowed the House to, at that time and in a timely fashion, consider legislation increasing the minimum wage roughly \$1 over the course of the next year. I am one of 20 or 21 Republicans who supported, who are cosponsoring our own separate free-standing bill, a competing measure to the Democratic bill that would actually raise the minimum wage slightly higher than the legislation proposed by the President and congressional Democrats.

But here is the part about the minimum wage debate I do not get. If this is such an enormous issue and pressing concern to the National Democratic Party, why did they not raise the minimum wage when they had the chance? That is to say, why did they not raise the minimum wage during the last 2 years or prior to last January, when they controlled both houses of the Congress and of course the White House? That is the part I do not get. There is a certain disconnect there because they did not act on legislation raising the minimum wage when they controlled both the legislative and executive branches of government.

Second, I have been maintaining all along and I have attempted to make

this case to our leadership, the Republican leadership of the House of Representatives, that a modest increase in the minimum wage needs to be linked to real reform of the welfare system.

It seems to me that we have many perverse incentives in American life today that are the result of misguided Federal policy. For example, we have an economic policy or a tax policy, tax code, that seems to encourage consumption and spending over savings and investment, and that in turn has put a tremendous strain on the so-called old-age retirement programs, social security and Medicare.

But we also have in our welfare system today, especially in my home State of California, which has a fairly lucrative welfare benefit structure, a perverse incentive in that welfare in the aggregate oftentimes pays someone more than what they can make in a minimum wage job. It seems to me to be rather basic, that if we want to reform welfare by moving people from welfare to work, helping them make what is a very difficult transition, especially for single mothers who many times struggle against heroic odds, that we have to raise the minimum wage so that at least the minimum wage pays more than welfare benefits.

The gentlewoman from California was absolutely right in the statistics that she quoted. Unfortunately, she walked off the floor because I do not think she wants to engage in a debate about this issue. She is right, though, when she says that a full-time minimum-wage worker today would earn only \$8,840 a year, which is far less than many States pay in welfare cash benefits and well below the Nation's poverty level.

It is my belief that we need to correct this inequity, an inequity that the Democrat majority in the last Congress was unwilling to address, so that people who want to work are not forced to choose between work and welfare because welfare actually pays better than work. So again, it seems to me we have to reverse that equation, address this perverse incentive, which is one of many that riddle American life today.

The other point I wanted to make on the minimum wage issue, watching, I believe it was, a CNN program over the weekend, their Inside Edition on late Sunday afternoon, early Sunday evening, they were profiling the Republican revolution after 15, 16 months of this Congress and sort of begging the question, is that revolution alive or dead?

□ 1915

They focused specifically on the subject of welfare reform, and they actually interviewed several current welfare recipients who, looking right into the camera, said "I don't feel that I can support myself, much less my family"; that is, meet the needs of my dependents and loved ones in an entry level minimum wage job; that is to say, a job probably in the service sector of